

# Local Community College thrives through Rural Development

Story and photos by Kevin Tuttle, USDA Rural Development

**Hayward, Wis.** – For a community college with an enrollment of 550 students in this small, rural community in northwest Wisconsin, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development has helped alleviate some financial burdens with recent grants.

The Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College (LCOOCC) has received four Tribal College Grant Funds from USDA Rural Development since 2001. A Tribal College Grant helps tribal colleges buy equipment, build or renovate classrooms, make repairs and finance infrastructure improvements.

In 2001, LCOOCC received over \$95,000, which was used toward a new roof for the facility, built in 1982. Nearly \$185,000 was awarded in 2003 for upgrading the heating, ventilation and air conditioning; with 2004 bringing in another \$85,500 for improvements to the school library. This year more than \$272,000 has been obligated, for additional upgrades throughout the facility, including installing a sprinkler system, additional lighting in the parking lot and purchasing furniture for common areas.

USDA Rural Development Wisconsin State Director Frank Frassetto said the school's upgrades are a testament to the determination and vision of its leadership.

"It's an honor to see LCOOCC's transformation from a basic



**Dan Gretz, Office of Sponsored Programs Director at LCOOCC, points out the new air conditioning and ventilation unit recently installed at the college with funds coming from a USDA Rural Development Tribal College Grant.**

structure to a modernized, healthy environment for its staff and students," he said. "Seeing how hard Dan Gretz, and others, worked at improving the entire facility and knowing that USDA Rural Development played a vital role in its progress is something we're very proud of."

"It was really a godsend for us," said Dan Gretz, Office of Sponsored Programs Director at LCOOCC. "We would've never been able to afford that without a grant. USDA Rural Development grants have been one of the sole sources to maintain the facility. Without them, we would've found a way to pay for it, but probably would've had to axe a position or

two or three."

Due to funding, or lack thereof, LCOOCC couldn't always build with high-grade materials, said Gretz, so much of the funding now goes to remodeling and redoing projects from the past. The grants have allowed the college to build a new library and entrance, which students appreciate.

"Everything looks nicer, especially the commons," said Amber Cain, a 17-year-old freshman from Hayward, majoring in pre-nursing.

Not just an aesthetically pleasing makeover has improved the



**Patti Renzelmann, left, and Jasmine Radke, USDA Rural Development Area Specialists, tour the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College's library. The library was built in part through Rural Development Tribal College Grants and creates a**

**modernized facility for its students and faculty to use and enjoy. A Tribal College Grant helps tribal colleges buy equipment, build or renovate classrooms, make repairs and finance infrastructure improvements.**

quality of life for its students—even the air they breathe inside the facility has been improved with better ventilation and air conditioning systems.

“It certainly looks nicer. It’s a little less stuffy, too,” said Vince Martinson, a liberal arts major from Hayward in his second year at the school.

One person who is especially proud of the accomplishments of the college is Patti Renzelmann, USDA Rural Development Area Specialist. She has been working with them since 2007, assisting Gretz with getting the projects through construction and encouraging him to apply for the 2008 college grant.

“I am delighted with the impact that Rural Development's Tribal Grants have on the maintenance and upgrades at the LCO Community College,” Renzelmann said. “The first time I entered the college, I walked around

plastic buckets situated in strategic places where water dripped from the roof. When talking with employees and students at the college the remarks are always complimentary of funding from USDA Rural Development.”

For more information on Lac Courte Oreille Ojibwa Community College, visit their Web site at [www.lco.edu](http://www.lco.edu).

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. Further information on our programs is available through USDA Rural Development can be obtained by visiting any Rural Development office, calling 715-345-7600, or visiting the agency's web site at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi).

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